

HEDRICK'S OBSESSION:

WIN

EVERY ROCKVILLE SOFTBALL CONTEST

Rockville softball pitcher Gretchen Hedrick has an obsession. She wants to win. Every game. Her determination is masked by her almost frail-looking appearance, but Hedrick has come

close to being unbeatable this season. Her coach, Bob Burke, feels her size (5 feet 2, 95 pounds) may have something to do with her 38-4 record in three years on the varsity.

"When other teams see her, they don't think she can be that fast, but she can really sling that thing over the plate," Burke says. "But I'll bet there isn't a pitcher around with a better won-loss record than hers."

As a freshman, Hedrick was an undefeated pitcher on the junior varsity. She lost her first varsity game, 5-4, to Seneca Valley as a sophomore.

In Hedrick's first state final, Rockville lost to Northeast, 9-8, in eight innings. But she almost had the game won. The Rams led, 8-6, in the bottom of the seventh with two outs and two strikes on the batter before Northeast rallied to tie the game and then win in extra innings.

Last season's final was different.

"That just wasn't us on the field and we lost, 22-2, to Surrattsville," Hedrick says. "The game was originally scheduled for the night before and it rained hard in the

fifth inning. We got home late. I pitched the worst I had ever pitched. It was so sad to see the seniors lose their last game that way."

Only one other Rockville team has reached the finals, 1979's 14-3 team. So this season, Hedrick would like to see Rockville win the Maryland title.

"I'm not sure that we can go to states this season because we lost a lot of our seniors," Hedrick says.

"We don't have as much experience working together. I'm going to pitch the best that I can. I don't want to let my

teammates down." But Hedrick's performances this season haven't

been a let-down. She has pitched two no-hitters.

"When I pitch like that, I just get so excited,"

Hedrick says "I want to keep going and going."

It's one of the best feelings I have. It really gives me self-confidence."

Her feelings are just as intense when she's pitching poorly.

"I get so mad at myself when I throw bad pitches," Hedrick says. "I've always tried to get my concentration down and make the next pitch a strike. But I've had to learn not to be so hard on myself. I know that if the ball is hit, I have good fielders behind me and we'll get the outs that way." Hedrick is working on improving other parts of her game, in addition to maintaining her composure in tough situations.

"I've been concentrating on my speed while keeping my accuracy," she says. "I'm trying to pitch at three speeds to help keep the batter off guard."

Control is important to Hedrick, who began pitching in the fifth grade.

"I like to pitch. Everything comes down to you. The pitcher is involved with every single play of every game," she says. "I like the way outfielders run and dive for balls, but pitching is never boring."

Becky Hedrick is the mother of Gretchen Hedrick and works at K mart 3576, Adelphi, Maryland as the office manager. Reprinted with permission from the Washington Post, Washington, D.C.

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